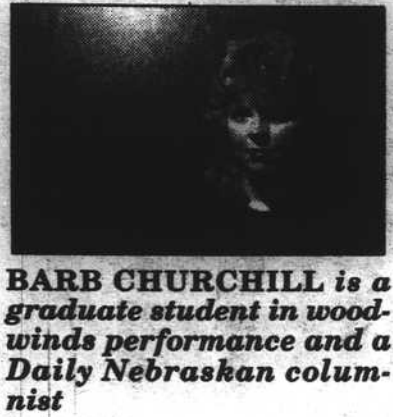


Contract collapse

Waiting periods on divorce fail to provide solution to problem



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Trick question: Who is the most obtuse person in Lincoln?

- a) The weather forecaster who predicted 1-3 inches last weekend.
- b) The kid who tried to sell me a Super Nintendo while all the power was off in my apartment building.
- c) The door-to-door suntan lotion salesman who tried to sell his wares at 4 a.m. Sunday (during our infamous snowstorm).
- d) Don Stenberg, attorney general of Nebraska.

Of course, the answer is d. Why d, you may ask?

Simple. Stenberg still hasn't learned not to make foolish statements about things he knows nothing about.

Stenberg's words have already sparked my ire. Stenberg believes that depression isn't an illness; that peo-

ple only miss work due to physical illnesses - not mental ones.

Obviously, Stenberg has never been depressed. He knows nothing about mental illness, just about Nebraska's "bottom line." Since recognizing depression as an illness would cost the state money, Stenberg is against it.

And, along with his view that the "bottom line" must be protected at all costs, Stenberg has decided to come out in favor of contract marriages.

Why does this not surprise me? Stenberg has decided to make political hay out of divorced people's pain and suffering - which, come to think about it, is typical behavior for a politician.

"But Barb," you say, "I have no intention of ever getting a divorce. What does this have to do with me?" Plenty.

The simple fact is that no one, with the possible exception of Donald Trump, gets married in order to divorce. Marriage is like the lottery. You can maximize your odds of success, but you're never sure until you play whether or not you've won.

To understand why Stenberg's comment is so ignorant, perhaps a brief review of contract marriages is in order.

Under a contract marriage, counseling would be required before you were married. You would have to go to counseling if your marriage was in trouble. And, there would be a two-year wait for your divorce (if needed); the only grounds for divorce under

contract marriage would be adultery, spousal abuse, abandonment, or if your spouse had been convicted of a major crime.

Stenberg said, "A covenant (contract) marriage would require more thought and effort to obtain and would carry with it a greater moral and legal commitment." Stenberg went on to say, "Today, I am presenting a legislative proposal aimed at one of the key factors in juvenile crime; poor school performance; juvenile drug, alcohol and tobacco use; and similar problems."

Nice to know that "curing" divorce would also cure so many other social ills.

The way that Stenberg put it makes it appear that people are just divorcing willy-nilly, without a care for themselves, their children, or their society. Statements like Stenberg's trivialize the pain and suffering that divorcees go through.

Obviously, Stenberg has never met a divorced person - or recognized one if he did.

We divorced individuals are every bit as moral as anyone else. We think things through, just like everyone else. We didn't make the choices we made because of "spiritual or moral poverty." We simply needed to get out of our marriages, because they weren't working.

What are we supposed to do when our marriages fail? Are we really supposed to stay with a person who lies, cheats, is abusive, violent, has bad morals and low principles? When our

spouse, who has promised to love, cherish, etc., has brought home a sexually transmitted disease?

Yeah, that's my America - marriage no matter what.

Ask yourself this question: What would you do in this situation? One of my male friends was married to a woman who cheated on him. She lied to him about her behavior, ran around town, abused drugs, made a real mess of his life. They had a child. What should he do?

He ignored it, until he walked in on his wife and her lover having sex in front of the baby. At that point, he went and filed for divorce. He had no choice.

Wouldn't any self-respecting human being do the same thing? Don't we have the right not to see the person we love the most screwing someone else in front of our child?

The sad thing is, this couple met in church. There was no sign of this sort of abusive behavior in my friend's fiancée. They dated for two years.

Tell me this, Don. How would a contract marriage have helped this situation?

One of Stenberg's best points is that studies show that children with two parents do better in life than those with only one parent. Fine. I have no problem with this.

However, as my friend Karron Bratt said, "What about marriages that are unhappy? Aren't kids better off with one good, functional parent than two unhappy, dysfunctional

ones?"

Stenberg needs to realize that children are better off when they feel safe and secure. As a divorced person and as a child of divorce, let me tell you - children are much, MUCH better off when they feel that their parents love them. And the simple fact is that children can't and won't feel that way when their parents are fighting all the time.

As for the counseling provisions under contract marriage, counseling is a fine idea in theory. However, counseling probably wouldn't have helped my male friend, because not everyone tells the truth about who they are. Sometimes people deliberately lie, but mostly people don't even know who they are themselves due to immaturity and lack of life experience.

There is another problem that Stenberg doesn't realize: What if your spouse doesn't want to go to counseling? What do you do then?

In my case, there was no alternative. My ex-husband refused counseling, saying there was nothing wrong with him. So, there was nothing I could do.

I bet Don Stenberg has never had someone go through hell on earth - which is what divorce is. And if he does know how bad divorce is, he is doubly foolish.

Let me say it again: No one gets married in order to divorce.

No one.

Wanted: Waffle House

Lincoln needs a place where syrup rings more bells than Paulou



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Nebraska... the good life.

That's what the sign at the border says anyway. If you look around, it's obvious that Nebraska is indeed the good life and has everything to offer a person. Quality education, strong family values, a phallus for a capital, and acres of parking.

But where's the Waffle House?

Out of the 1,110 Waffle Houses spread throughout 20 states, our dear Nebraska gets the guff.

Normally I don't hold restaurant chains close to my heart, but after my first visit, the Waffle House franchise was firmly entrenched near my left ventricle.

Allow me to explain.

It was spring break of 1996. The UNL ultimate team was traveling to the University of Texas in Austin for a tournament. At the wheel was my roommate Stump and riding shotgun was a fellow who answers to the name Poop. I try to make it a habit not to fall asleep when my life is in Stump's hands, but after pulling two consecutive all-nighters for the sake of midterms, I was out like stone-washed denim before we reached the Kansas border.

Poop, whom I'd like to wish a fast recovery in his wood chopping induced cranial wound, woke me up 10 hours later in the parking lot of a Denton, Texas, Waffle House.

Walking into that Waffle House, I was as shocked and confused as a

freshly neutered cat. I went to bed in a normal world and awoke in some sick and twisted dimension that was the Waffle Zone. All around were drunken cow pokes a hootin' and hollerin'. It was a bizarre state of delirium that no drug could ever match.

The confused state was quickly transformed into a state of euphoria thanks to a waffle slathered in maple syrup. (Quick fact: Waffle House is the world's leading server of waffles, T-bone steaks, omelets, cheese 'n eggs, raisin toast, and apple butter.) Being Texas natives, Stump and Poop couldn't believe my instant obsession with that white trash version of Denny's. To them, Waffle Houses were an eyesore, blinding you at every off ramp, but to a Nebraskan, unaware of fine southern dinning, the Waffle House was the promised land.

For the remainder of the trip, I played the role of the 4-year old. I yelled with joy at the sight of every Waffle House and cried until we stopped.

This weekend, I made a triumphant return to the house that waffles built. I was in Tulsa, Oklahoma, for my cousin Erin's wedding and my handy Waffle House locator guide told me there were four to choose from. My plan to gorge myself on the \$4.99 all-you-can-endure menu was thwarted by the dynamic duo of great aunts and uncles, Andy and Tish.

Their days of spoiling me with homemade goods made me resort to getting a pair of pecan waffles for take out, one for myself, and one for my current roommate.

While I waited for my "Good Food Fast," I grilled the waitress with end-

less questions. How many waffles have been served? How many ways can you get a burger made? Stumped for answers, she resorted to giving me a menu and a job application to take home. (Quick fact: Over 330 million waffles have been served since 1955.)

On the menu, I found a nice cornucopia of Waffle House information that so eloquently told the Waffle House story.

Waffle House began as the dream of two neighbors who envisioned a company dedicated to people. On Labor Day 1955, the dream became a reality as the first Waffle House opened for business in Avondale Estates, Ga., a suburb of Atlanta. Soon, the business grew throughout Georgia and to neighboring states. These early restaurants established the famous Waffle House reputation of serving "Good Food Fast" in the friendliest atmosphere around.

Now why doesn't Lincoln have one?

Well, it turns out that Waffle House operates like all the other franchises out there.

Independent investors can purchase the rights to own and operate their very own Waffle House. That means that if someone saw fit, they could start one up in Lincoln. Excuse me for a

moment now as I try to use my columnist position as a way to influence others as I present to you the "Top Seven Reasons Why Lincoln Can Support a Waffle House." (Quick fact: I chose seven because there are seven different ways you can get your hash browns cooked.)

1. With the recent opening of the "Burritos as big as your head store," the next niche market on the list would have to be the market for grits, which in Lincoln has yet to be tapped.

2. Nebraskans love beef, and if y'all advertised that there are at least 844,739 ways to prepare a Waffle House burger, the world's beef supply would plummet.

3. Since Waffle House serves Coca-Cola exclusively, put it next to campus and become the local fix for Coke-aholics.

4. Seventy-five cents for a bottomless cup of "Americas best coffee." Much cheaper than the local esoteric coffee joints.

5. There is something like 238 places a person can get drunk in the Lincoln area. That's a lot of drunks. Drunk people love to eat!

6. The Waffle House job application is so ridiculously simple that even Lincoln's stupidest resident could find employment there. Just imagine over 200,000 potential employees.

7. The sight of Bert's Chili on the menu made my friend Jason salivate to the point of dehydration.

There they are. My seven reasons.

If reading this has you thinking of dropping out of school and moving to Tennessee and marrying a coal-miner's daughter just so you can live near a Waffle House, don't. Just drop their "Let us Know" Dept. at P.O. Box 6450, Norcross, Ga., 30091 and let them know how badly Lincoln wants a Waffle House to call its own.



MATT HANEY/DN